

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of determining whether an individual having chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection will respond to interferon alpha (IFN $\alpha$ ) treatment, the method comprising:

- i) obtaining a pre-treatment sample from said chronic HBV-infected individual, and
- ii) analyzing said pre-treatment sample for the presence or absence of antibodies reactive with a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues 94-117 (SEQ ID NO:1);

wherein the presence of said antibodies in said pre-treatment sample indicates that said individual will respond to said treatment and the absence of said antibodies in said pre-treatment sample indicates that said individual will not respond to said treatment.

2.-4. (Cancelled).

5. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1 wherein the individual is HBeAg positive.

6. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1 wherein the individual is HBeAg negative.

7. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1 wherein, in step (ii), said pre-treatment sample is analyzed for the presence or absence of IgG or IgM antibodies reactive with said preS1 peptide.
8. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1 wherein the pre-treatment sample is a blood, serum or plasma sample.
9. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 1 wherein step (ii) comprises:
  - contacting the pre-treatment sample with a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues 94-117 (SEQ ID NO:1) and;
  - detecting the presence or absence of binding of said antibodies to said preS1 peptide.
10. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 9 wherein the preS1 peptide comprises a detectable label.
11. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 9 wherein said preS1 peptide is immobilised.
12. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 9 wherein said binding is detected with a labelled secondary antibody.
- 13.-19. (Cancelled).

20. (Currently Amended) A method of treating [[an]] a chronic HBV infection in an individual identified as being responsive to IFN $\alpha$  comprising:

i) obtaining a pre-treatment sample from [[an]] a chronic HBV-infected individual,  
and

ii) analyzing said pre-treatment sample for the presence or absence of antibodies reactive with a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues 94-117 (SEQ ID NO:1);

wherein the presence of said antibodies in said pre-treatment sample indicates that said individual will respond to IFN $\alpha$  treatment, and;

administering IFN $\alpha$  to said individual identified as being responsive to IFN $\alpha$ .

21. (Cancelled).

22. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method according to claim 20 further comprising administering corticosteroid to said individual identified as being responsive to IFN $\alpha$ .

23. (Cancelled).